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Approved For Release 2008/03/04 : CIA-RDP80B01554R003400050005-9

The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D. C. 20505

15 August 1978


MEMORANDUM FOR: Vice Admiral B. R. Inman, U.S. Navy
Director, National Security Agency

SUBJECT: Withholding of Strategic Intelligence Information

1. Attached is a copy of a memorandum written by a staff analyst on 10 March of this year. In it he makes the allegation that NSA and NSC have long had a practice of withholding certain sensitive intelligence information from the rest of the intelligence community and even the DCI.

2. I have discussed this with you on the phone. It is my understanding that this allegation is unfounded. Specifically, I understand that if any message has foreign intelligence content it will be appropriately distributed, always including the DCI, though there may be deletions of the names of or quotations from U.S. personalities. It is further my understanding that only messages mentioning or quoting U.S. personalities and which are not considered to be foreign intelligence in content are given limited distribution, including being withheld from the DCI.

3. I would appreciate your confirmation of the above so that I can deal appropriately with this 10 March memorandum which has just recently come to my attention.



STANSFIELD TURNER

Attachment

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SUBJECT : Withholding of Strategic Intelligence Information

1. This memorandum has been prepared at your instructions to advise you about an NSA procedure in handling certain sensitive intercepts which may infringe on the DCI's responsibilities and constrain our ability to provide timely and accurate intelligence analyses.
2. It is my understanding that since the late 1950's, it has been NSA practice to embargo from all distribution except to the National Security Council Staff certain categories of intercepts considered particularly sensitive by the NSC. It has been NSC practice to exercise a power of veto over whether such embargoed intercepts--termed "series check" material--could subsequently be released by NSA to CIA. There are some grounds to believe that some, and perhaps many such intercepts were withheld even from the DCI, and it is possible that this practice still continues.
3. The criteria for withholding such information were apparently broadened under the last two Administrations, to include material relevant to both SALT I and SALT II. From my work on the Soviet strategic planning process and the fourth generation ICBM programs, I know of several specific and important such cases in 1972, 1973, and as recently as 1976. Detailed examples can be furnished if desired.

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SENSITIVE INTELLIGENCE SOURCES
AND METHODS INVOLVED

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NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY
CENTRAL SECURITY SERVICE
FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, MARYLAND 20755

Cy _____ SERIES "B"

Serial: N1021
25 August 1978

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MEMORANDUM FOR ADMIRAL STANSFIELD TURNER, U. S. NAVY
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Withholding of Strategic Intelligence Information

1. With reference to your memorandum of 15 August 1978 and its attachment, I have again conducted a review of historical data related to the dissemination of sensitive intelligence information by the National Security Agency. After a thorough review of data and interviews with personnel who have handled such dissemination over the past ten years, I have concluded with the highest level of confidence that allegations of withholding of strategic intelligence information from the rest of the intelligence community by NSA are not true.
2. For a number of years a procedure existed at NSA, referred to as a "series check", whereby intercepted messages reflecting discussions with U.S. officials were referred to the named officials for their review and recommendations on limitations in distribution prior to normal dissemination to all who had expressed interest in the topical or geographic coverage provided by the intercepted intelligence. At no time did such prior review involve topics or categories of intelligence requiring review. Thus no series check would have been conducted about intercept bearing on strategic arms control per se. However, intercept discussing views of U.S. officials conveyed in negotiations on strategic arms control would have been subject to prior review. I was able to find one intercept in this area where the reviewing official requested no electrical dissemination of the product, and NSA proceeded to make distribution of the product via hard copy (as opposed to message) to a limited number of officials in the Government, which included intelligence officials at STATE and CIA.
3. The addition of minimization requirements by Attorney General Levi following Congressional investigation of retention of data on U. S. citizens produced some changes in the series check procedures, in that the name of U. S. citizens were deleted from the product, even before review by a specified official of the government.

Classified by DIRNSA/CSS (NSA/CSSM 123-2)

Exempt from GDS, EO 11652, Cat 2

Declassify Upon Notification by the Originator

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4. After assuming duties as Director, I reviewed the "series check" mechanism and Attorney General minimization procedures and revised past practices. There is no prior review by those U. S. officials mentioned in messages regarding who should have access to the intelligence contained in the intercept. If a U. S. official is mentioned in an intercepted message, such intercept is forwarded for review within the Agency to determine whether the intercept contains foreign intelligence or only conveys statements of U. S. positions/policy without any foreign comment/observations. If there is only U. S. information conveyed, the intercept is not issued as foreign intelligence product, but if it appears that it would be valuable, the intercept is provided to the involved U.S. official to permit him to evaluate his success in conveying the desired policy/information. If the intercept does contain commentary by the reporting foreign source or includes other non-U.S. views/data, it will be appropriately distributed, always including the DCI, though there may be deletions of the names of or of quotations from U.S. personalities. I believe these revised procedures properly discharge the spirit as well as the letter of the Attorney General minimization procedures while ensuring that no arbitrary limits can be applied by any U.S. official that would deny foreign intelligence to the DCI and other key officials. As you know, the sensitivity of the foreign intelligence does sometimes lead us to make such dissemination by hard copy rather than by electrical message.



B. R. INMAN
Vice Admiral, U. S. Navy
Director, NSA/Chief, CSS

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